

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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AID-05 /070 W

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R 030458Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 135

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSSAG NKP THA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 5923

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, MILI, CB

SUBJ: MARCH CASUALTIES SOAR

REF: PHNOM PENH 4256

1. SUMMARY. CASUALTIES IN MARCH GREATLY ROSE OVER FEBRUARY AS BOTH SIDES TOGETHER LOST 19,000 MEN KILLED, WOUNDED OR MISSING. THE CASUALTIES BREAK DOWN INTO: 3,200 ESTIMATED KC DEAD AND A PROJECTED 8,000 WOUNDED; 1,900 REPORTED FANK KILLED AND MISSING IN ACTION AND 5,900 WOUNDED. SINCE THE KC LAUNCHED THEIR NEW YEAR'S DAY OFFENSIVE THEY HAVE SUFFERED A CONSERVATIVELY ESTIMATED 32,200 CASUALTIES, OF WHOM 9,700 WERE KILLED IN ACTION. FANK REPORTS 22,300 CASUALTIES FOR THE SAME PERIOD, OF WHOM 5,700 WERE KILLED OR MISSING. FANK HAS REPLACED ITS COMBAT LOSSES (SEPTEL) BUT HAS SUFFERED A NET LOSS OF COMBAT POWER DUE PRIMARILY TO 6,600 DESERTIONS SINCE JANUARY 1. END SUMMARY.

2. KC LOSSES FOR MARCH SHARPLY INCREASED OVER FEBRUARY BUT HAVE NOT REACHED JANUARY'S RECORD. FANK KILLED AN  
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ESTIMATED 3,200 KC. IF THIS FIGURE IS ACCURATE, THE KC

PROBABLY SUFFERED AN ADDITIONAL PROJECTED 8,000 MEN WOUNDED. THE KC LOST HEAVILY IN ACTIONS NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH AND IN THE NEAK LUONG/BANAM AREA ON THE LOWER MEKONG. THE KHMER AIR FORCE ACCOUNTED FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF KC CASUALTIES. THESE KILLED BY AIR FIGURES HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO ELIMINATE DOUBLE-COUNTING BY GROUND FORCES.

3. BOTH SLUGGISH KC PERFORMANCE AND RALLIER/PRISONER INTERROGATIONS SUPPORT THE HIGH CASUALTY FIGURES NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH. ON AT LEAST THREE OCCASIONS THE KC FAILED TO EXPLOIT GAPS IN FANK LINES IN THE NORTHWEST SECTOR WHICH WOULD HAVE GIVEN THEM DIRECT ACCESS TO THE AIRPORT. THIS FAILURE TO CAPITALIZE SUGGESTS EITHER INADEQUATE COMMAND OR INSUFFICIENT RESERVES TO PUSH INTO THE GAPS. A RECENT KC PRISONER HAS SAID THAT THE MAJOR ENEMY UNITS IN THIS AREA ARE INDEED UNDERSTRENGTH, HAVING TAKEN HEAVY CASUALTIES. OTHER PRISONERS AND RALLIERS ELSEWHERE ON THE CAPITAL'S PERIMETER HAVE REPORTED POOR KC MORALE, USE OF UNTRAINED, YOUNG RECRUITS AND EVEN SOME DESERTIONS FROM KC UNITS. KC DISCIPLINE WILL KEEP THEIR TROOPS FIGHTING, HOWEVER, AND THEY ARE SO FAR ABLE TO RECRUIT AS NEEDED, ALTHOUGH THE QUALITY IS POOR.

4. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED FANK HAS TAKEN ITS HEAVIEST LOSSES IN THE AREAS FACING GREATEST KC PRESSURE. THE SEVENTH DIVISION IS DOWN TO ABOUT 3,000 MEN (OF 7,200 AUTHORIZED STRENGTH) ACTUALLY AT THE FRONT. THE 23RD BRIGADE, WHICH THE KC CHASED OUT OF TUOL LEAP NORTHWEST OF THE AIRPORT EARLY IN MARCH, REPORTS ONLY 630 MEN AS OF MARCH 26 (FULL BRIGADE STRENGTH IS 2,200 MEN). TOTAL FANK CASUALTIES IN MARCH ARE: 1,300 KILLED AND 600 MISSING, PLUS 5,900 WOUNDED. OF THE WOUNDED, 2,500 RECEIVED LIGHT INJURIES AND PRESUMABLY WILL BE FIT FOR DUTY SHORTLY. SOME 2,500 FANK SOLDIERS DESERTED IN MARCH.

5. FANK EFFORTS TO REPLACE LOSSES (SEPTTEL) HAD FAIR SUCCESS. RECRUITMENT NETTED 2,800 MEN, AN AMNESTY FOR DESERTERS CAUSED 1,700 ERRANT SOLDIERS TO REPORT IN, AND

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ANOTHER 600 MEN RECEIVED ORDERS TO TRANSFER FROM OFFICES TO FRONT-LINE UNITS. THE NET MONTHLY BALANCE SHEET SHOWS A LOSS OF A FEW HUNDRED MEN, ASSUMING THAT RETURNING LIGHTLY WOUNDED CANCEL OUT THE DESERTIONS.  
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